1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

geographic position in the centre of the colony has also made it harder for them to evade it. Nevertheless, many have emigrated. In 1941 and again in 1944, when the writer visited South Africa, he found thousands of Ovimbundu on the Rand and many more in the Rhodesias and the Congo. Many are also known to have gone to the South-West Territory and to Bechuanaland, and some even to such distant points as Natal's north coast and French Equatorial Africa.[1]

Recent Developments

Currency, in the sense of money, is quite a recent introduction to the Ovimbundu. To the end of their trading activities, cloth ('trade goods') was the standard of exchange. Although dependence upon world markets caused prices to fluctuate with the course of the rubber trade, as we have seen, there was not, however, the great range which follows the fluctuations of the money market through a course of inflation and deflation. The Ovimbundu had had some dealings in money before the time of World War I, when there was a silver coinage, so that the depreciation which set in about 1921 was all the more confusing to them. This is not the place to discuss the finances and banking of Angola, but it must be noted that the conversion of the 'Escudo' into the 'Angolar' in 1928 at the rate of Ag. 0,80 to Esc. 1$00 greatly increased the sense of confusion among the natives. This was only to be expected when the native tax remained at Ag. 80,00 where it was Esc. 80,00 before, whereas daily wages to contract labourers became Ag. 0,80 where before they were Esc. 1$00. The confusion was considerable.[2]

Taxes began to be levied soon after military occupation, but for some years they were very small, especially in relation to opportunities for earning. When the head-tax reached Esc. 80,00 it remained at that figure for some years. In 1935 a 'work tax' and

[1] This state of affairs is frequently and quite freely commented upon in the Angola papers. For a recent notice see local correspondence entitled 'Notícias do Cuma' in the *Voz do Planalto* (Nova Lisboa) for 17 Aug. 1946. One of the most serious recent indictments is contained in an article in *O Farolim*, Luanda, 5 Nov. 1945, by Padre J. Alves Correia. This distinguished writer asserts that the present labour policy is 'killing the goose which lays the golden egg'.

[2] For finance, currency, banking, and economic conditions in general, see Department of Overseas Trade, *Economic Conditions in Angola*, H.M.S.O., 1929. There are also reports for 1923 and 1925, but the one for 1929 covers the previous decade.

A professional hunter usually works alone, using bows and arrows, clubs, spears, and several kinds of trap.(1) Nets and poison are not used. Every hunter makes his own arrow-shafts and feathers; the points are made by a blacksmith. On the night before leaving for a hunt, the *ukongo* calls in his fellow hunters to share a ceremony which includes dancing and the re-anointing of the weapons with beer and palm-oil.

Communal hunts usually take place in June-July, in the middle of the dry season, when large tracts of land are covered with grass ten or more feet high. The day for the hunt is set by the village headman; spears and arrows are prepared and, when the word is given, a party of about 30 men and boys move off to the assigned area of tall grass. A ring is formed round about two square miles of land, the hunters standing just within sight of each other. The grass is trodden down, fires started, and the animals killed as they rush from the flames. Antelope of many kinds, snakes, foxes, wolves, hyenas, mice and rabbits and occasionally leopards are killed in this way.

FISHING

In the Kunene and some of the other larger rivers fish are large and plentiful, and men go on communal fishing expeditions, and return with fish to sell.(2) Men usually fish with bark lines, women use basket-traps(3) and poisons. Poison is used, usually in the dry season, when the rivers are shallow. Both men and women use nets, and sometimes a fish-weir or *olunja* may be employed; this has an opening in the middle, in the lower side of which is placed a basket-trap. At the coast and along the Kwanza river dug-out canoes, about 20-30 feet long, are sometimes used for fishing.(4)

DOMESTIC ANIMALS

The principal domestic animals are the cow *(onjindi)*, ox *(ongombe*, which is also the generic name for cattle), bull *(onui)*, sheep *(onene)*, goat *(ohombo)*, pig *(ongulu)*, dog *(onbua)*, and chicken *(osanji)*.(5) The only transport animal is the ox, used both for riding and for drawing carts.(6)

Cattle are a measure of wealth, but few families own large herds. Childs lists the domestic animals in a typical village of 196 inhabitants as: 9 head of cattle, 13 goats, 20 sheep, 100 pigs, and about 100 chickens. Cattle are used for paying fines and debts, for funeral feasts, and for marriage payments. Cows are not usually milked, and cattle are killed for food only when they are aged or injured, or occasionally during the June-July period of food shortage. Treated hides are used to cover stools, and for making pouches and corn-bags.(7)

The cattle herd obtains most of its food by grazing, but in the dry

(1) Some hunters have guns, but the use of gunpowder is restricted by the Portuguese.
(2) Cashmore, op.cit., p.143.
(3) See Cashmore, loc.cit. for a brief description of the basket-trap.
(4) Hambly, (2) 1934, p.145.
(5) Ibid., pp.152-6.
(6) Childs, personal communication. Cf. Hambly, op.cit., p.152.
(7) Hambly, op.cit., p.153.

Mat-making

462 285 [412] The making of mats is a specialised craft for men. Generally elderly men are the mat-makers. Two tools are used, a borer and a needle, both products of the blacksmith's forge. Hambly[1] describes the making of reed sleeping mats, large mats used for partitions, and string bags. There are four distinct types of mats, each of which has its specialist.[2]

Leather-work

282 Leather pouches worn on a broad leather belt are part of the essential equipment of the hunter. The pouch is square, rectangular, or semi-cylindrical in shape, and may be decorated with cross-shaped patterns, or brass-headed nails used for decorative effect. Hide is also used for the seats of four-legged wooden stools. Hides are crudely dressed: they are soaked, the inner surface rubbed with ashes, the hair scraped away, and the hide pegged out.[3]

Wood-carving

323 [463] Wood-carving, which is men's work, includes the following specialisations: doors, windows and their frames; coffins; beds, tables and chairs; mortars, pestles, grinding-handles, and handles for various iron implements; stools, household utensils, carved images etc.; drums and other musical instruments; canoes (dug-outs and coracles).[4] Illustrations are given by Hambly.[5]

TRADE

438 484 791 [982] Caravan trade is now confined to short journeys when corn, beans and beeswax are carried by men and women porters to the traders' stores. Formerly however it was an important feature of tribal life. Each caravan had its professional leader, and was accompanied by a diviner or medicine-man. Before a caravan started out, a ceremony was performed at which the principal performers were the village headman and the medicine-man. The head of the former headman was brought from its box, sewn in oxhide; blood from a sacrificed animal was sprinkled on the head, and invocation was made to the deceased by the village headman, asking for good fortune for the journey.[6]

438 436 Today the Ovimbundu exchange products among themselves both by barter and the use of Portuguese money,[7] but there are no large markets except in the towns.

[439] 438 The "trade-agreements" between the Ovimbundu kingdoms and between the Ovimbundu and other tribes have been mentioned above.[8] Accompanying these, regional industrial and commercial specialisations within Ovimbundu country developed. Thus in the middle of the last century

(1) Hambly, op.cit., pp.169-70.
(2) Childs, 1949, p.109.
(3) Hambly, op.cit., p.176.
(4) Childs, op.cit., p.110.
(5) Op.cit., Plates XIII to XXI.
(6) Hambly, op.cit., p.156.
(7) For details of Ovimbundu units of measurement see Hambly, op.cit., p.157.
(8) p.9.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

the tree in order to lower the hive with a long rope of bark or plaited fiber, while beneath the tree men are prepared to take the hive, which is opened over a smoky fire. The men wear no protection, consequently they are badly stung. Boys are encouraged to help, and those who run away receive no honey. Honey may be eaten alone or with manioc. No drink is made from honey only, but ochasa is the name given to beer with honey in it. *Ovingundu* is a drink made from pounded corn which has been soaked in water to which a little honey has been added. The drink is allowed to remain untouched over night; thus it becomes sweet and is mildly intoxicating. 231 263 273

Wax is a very important item of trade. In the remote places natives bring to small trading posts balls of wax which are about two pounds in weight. These in former days were a standard of exchange in terms of which other values could be measured. These balls of wax are made into large cakes for foreign export. In the Esele country a fiber strainer is used for cleaning the wax. Honey is sometimes dried in very large baskets which are three feet in diameter and two inches deep. These baskets were not observed among the Ovimbundu, but they are used in the region of Cassanga in southern Angola. The honey of wild bees when eaten in the comb is palatable; it would be more so if one could disregard the presence of numerous dead bees. 439 257 [436]

The bow is the chief weapon of the hunter. The release of the arrow is made with the index and middle fingers (Plate XXXIX, Fig. 1). I have observed this method among the Ovimbundu of the Benguela Highlands, in the region of Kipungo, in the far south among the Vakuanyama, and among the Vasele of the Novo Redondo hinterland. Arrows differ considerably in pattern as the illustrations show (Plate XVII, Figs. 1-9); the Ovimbundu have arrow-points of excellent workmanship. The manufacture of these arrow-points is one of the most skilled occupations of the blacksmith. Each man makes his own shafts and feathers them. The arrows of the Vasele have leaf-shaped iron points; so also have those used by the Vakuanyama. 411 171 224 [326]

Among the Ovimbundu are specialists who make bows from elastic woods called *usia* and *osombia*. The bow itself is *ohonji* and the arrow is *usongo*. At the third shot I saw a young Ocimbundu boy split a cane which was placed upright at a distance of thirty-three feet. The throwing club (*ohunya*) is used for killing small game such as hares. [463]

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

At the present time a day's march is twenty-five miles, during which a man carries sixty pounds, while the load for a woman is half that weight. The gait of the Ovimbundu includes a limp at every step, so suggesting that the carrier is lame or tired. This appears to be a method consciously adopted as a protection against fatigue, because all muscles are momentarily relaxed. Loads are carried on the head in a long forked stick to which they are lashed. When the carrier rests, the load is not placed on the ground, but is held upright on the stick (Plate XXX, Fig. 2). Such a method avoids the strain of lifting the load from the ground after each rest pause.

Although the Ovimbundu have an exchange of products among themselves by both barter and the use of Portuguese money, there are no large markets, with the exception of those at the coastal towns of Loanda, Lobito, and Benguela. There is absolutely nothing in Angola which can be compared with the great markets in Nigeria.

Despite the absence of a system of exchange on a large scale, the Ovimbundu have many terms describing units of measurement. There are native standards of length, area, and capacity, but no measures of weight which are undeniably of Umbundu origin.

The unit of length (*epaluma*) is the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the middle finger when the hand is outstretched. The term for two of these units is *apaluma avali*. These words are the plural of *epaluma; avali* means two. These units are used to measure tobacco before it has been coiled.

Cloth is measured by stretching the arms to their full extent in line with the shoulders; the distance between the tips of the middle fingers is *epeka*. The stride for measuring land is *elianga*.

Onjimba is an area about twenty-five feet square. *Etemo* ("hoe") is an area of land two hundred yards long and thirty feet broad. A large field covers two or three *atemo*.

Measures of capacity are provided by various types of baskets. The large conical basket (*ohumba*) has an interwoven mark which indicates a measure for corn, meal, and beans. *Ocitenge* is a coarsely made basket used as a unit of capacity. *Uhamba* is a basket two feet long and one foot deep. The basket on a rectangular base is also *uhamba*, but at the present day cans are taking the place of all these old measures. Palm oil is measured in a gourd (*ocitau* or *ombangi*) of definite size. This little gourd is also used for measuring a viscous substance from trees. The word *ekokoto* is used to describe this mucilage.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

436 804 Balls of wax and tobacco were, and are now, definite standar of trade. To some extent rubber as a medium of exchange has be used through contact with eastern Angola. The Umbundu wo *ocilila* expresses a weight of about thirty kilos.

805 221 There is no measure for minutes or hours. I have seen a ma of the Luchazi tribe keep account of the number of days taken on journey by cutting notches on a stick. Ngonga says that the Ovim bundu reckon by cutting notches, also by knotting a piece of strin Three days would be expressed by the words *akumbi atatu* ("thre suns"). The word day or sun is used in fixing a time. There is n word for week. A month is *osai*, which is the word for moon. Whe the corn is ripe the people say, "We are in a new year." Anothe yearly time mark is the arrival of the first rains, probably in th middle of September.

The words *oku lima* ("to cultivate") yield the word *ulima*, whic designates the period between the beginnings of two rainy seasons Corn is planted about the time of the first heavy rains, which occu in late September or early October. Naturally, this important occa sion forms a somewhat uncertain time base; nevertheless it is th one used to express the lapse of years up to five in number. Afte such a period the estimation of time is unreliable.

INDUSTRIES

IRON-WORK

326 Among occupations of primary importance is that of the black smith (*ocirinda*). Owing to the increasing importation of hoe blade and other iron goods, together with the facilities for collecting scra iron, the winning and smelting of iron is increasingly rare. There are probably very few places where the old type of conical clay furnace now exists. Almost any fragments of iron are melted at the forge where a box is kept to hold nails, hoop iron from packing cases, and other fragments resulting from proximity to a European culture.

Nothing is mixed with the iron, neither is there any casting in molds. The only process is the forging of red-hot iron. The Ovim bundu do not draw iron wire, although they know of the process which is practised by the Vachokue.

The work of the blacksmith was studied at the village of Njongolo in Elende. The men were for a time reticent respecting the nature of their training and the ceremony of initiation, but the chief of the village helped considerably by persuading the men to speak freely.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

The great distinguishing mark of the Ovimbundu was their participation in the caravan trade. Some of the neighbouring people also engaged in trading journeys (e.g. the Chokwe) but in central Angola the dominant traders were the Ovimbundu by reason of their control of the routes to Benguela and Catumbela, a control which as Livingstone's narrative shows they tried for a while to turn into a monopoly.[45] With this must be linked the greater readiness of the Ovimbundu to adopt European ways, marked by the general adoption of cloths for wear by at latest the mid-nineteenth century.[46]

3. *Economics and Social Structure*

This section will describe the economic life and social structure which marked the period of the rubber trade (1874–1911). A genuine currency existed in the form of cloth, and fortunes could be made in it. Serpa Pinto tells us of one Otjimbundu who made £3,500 by trading in the interior and that he had met many men who 'turned over capital of a thousand to twelve hundred pounds sterling',[48] presumably in trade goods since Portuguese currency did not circulate among the Ovimbundu. At the capitals of the kingdoms genuine towns grew up. Magyar in the middle of the nineteenth century estimated that 5,000 people lived at Bailundo[49] and the British explorer Cameron who had crossed Africa from Zanzibar says of Ekovongo, the capital of Bie, 'the town of Kagnombe, the largest I came across during my whole journey, being more than three miles in circumference. On arrival I was met by the Kagnombe's secretary, chamberlain, and captain of the guard who wore red waistcoats as a sign of their dignity. The secretary was more ornamental than useful, being unable to write, but a subordinate, a black man and native of Dondo, was better educated and conducted the trade of Kagnombe with the coast'.[47]

[45] Ibid., p. 205.
[46] Ibid., p. 206, referring to Magyar as evidence.
[48] Serpa Pinto, pp. 161–2.
[49] Magyar, p. 391.
[47] V. L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, London, 1877. Vol. II, pp. 206–7.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

drinking-mugs, lanterns, metal plates, pens, pencils, wine, and writing slates are bought from the traders. Axe and hoe handles, buckets, bedsteads, beer, bows and arrows, chairs, fish-traps, mats, mush sticks, pottery, pounding-blocks, stools, tables, and small metal objects such as knives are made by Ovimbundu and may be sold locally. To this local trade may be added the selling of pieces of meat by anyone who has killed a pig, or gone hunting and killed a duiker. Very occasionally somebody who has bought cloths in a town or has some hand-made object superior to the local average may tour villages selling his goods as a pedlar.

The only trade which at all recalls the days of the caravan trade is the cattle trade with the Kwanyama Ambo. As in the rubber trade the Ovimbundu make use of their intermediary geographical position. They obtain from Luanda shells called *olomande* (singular *omande*). One of these shells costs 10 escudos (2s. 6d.) at Luanda and ten of them will buy a beast in Kwanyama country. Alternatively 30 rounds of tobacco will buy a beast there. I knew several men who had made, or planned to make, trips of this nature. The analogy with the caravan trade breaks down, however, when the relative importance of the two is examined. The caravan trade determined the economic standards of the Ovimbundu, absorbed a great part of the time of every able-bodied man and youth, and influenced every aspect of Umbundu life from the foreign policy of the kings to accusations of sorcery; the cattle-keeping is relatively unimportant economically since the Ovimbundu do not drink milk, and eat meat, even chicken or pork, very irregularly, nor does the occasional sale of cattle to traders altogether balance their uncertain survival away from their indigenous grasses. The real importance of cattle in the economy seems to be as a form of capital investment for spare savings, an investment which can be liquidated either by sacrifice on ceremonial occasions or back into money by sale. Socially, it may be thought of as marking the survival of the Umbundu capacity and enthusiasm for trading in an age when the economic situation has closed the old routes. Indeed, perhaps the subconscious motive for the Ovimbundu who trade is to show that they can act outside of that economic framework of cultivation